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NSC BRIEFING

7 February 1956

SOVIET OVERTURES TO EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS

- I. Of Europe's 12 Socialist Parties, half have reportedly received "engraved invitations" of one sort or another from the Soviet Union during past 3 months. Tenor of the "invitations": to send Party delegations on tours of the USSR and to establish "mutual cooperation" with the Soviet Communist Party.
 - A. New Soviet campaign of "winning friends" began in Nov '55, Khrushchev with proposal to Norwegian Prime Minister for contact between Communist Party and Norwegian Labor Party.
 - B. Since then, Soviet are known to have approached France, Finland, and Denmark.
 - C. Have also reportedly approached Netherlands and West Germany.
- II. French Socialists have accepted invitation to Moscow: Norwegians, Danes and Finns have not.
 - A. Norwegian Prime Minister Gerhardsen, who received Khrushchev's proposal during Moscow visit (Nov '55), refused to commit himself, took matter up with Labor Party Central Committee on his return.
 - B. Party rejected offer on 28 Nov; Norwegian Government instead made as yet unaccepted counter-proposal for exchange of press representatives.
 - C. Danes rejected on grounds ideological incompatibility.
 - D. Finnish Socialists, approached by Sov Ambassador just ducked.

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H. Still to be approached by Soviets: UK, Sweden, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg and Iceland.

III. Soviet campaign has some striking parallels with policy switch (and Comintern tactics) after 1933 Nazi triumph in Germany.

At that time:

A. Stalin abandoned earlier line of bitter hostility toward Germany's Western neighbors (particularly France) and began to seek allies against Hitler.

1. joined League of Nations in 1934 and became champion of collective security.

2. concluded security pacts with France and Czechoslovakia in 1935.

B. International communist activities were subordinated to the needs of Soviet diplomacy.

1. Seventh Congress of Comintern (July-Aug 1935) abandoned violent attacks on "Social-Fascists" and called for creation of "Popular Fronts" with Socialists and anti-Fascist bourgeois parties.

IV. Offers show new Soviet "flexibility": approaches would have been inconceivable in Stalin's last years.

A. Opening bid in campaign--Khrushchev offer to Norwegians--was first such ever to be made by USSR to any non-Communist party abroad.

- B. Selection of Norwegians may have been because of close ties between their Labor Party and Yugoslavs--even earlier beneficiaries of Soviet "flexibility".
 - 1. Soviet leaders hope to promote "significance" of USSR's public repudiation of former attacks on Yugos and implicit "recognition" of the admissibility of "different forms of socialist development") among European Socialists in general.
 - 2. Bid to Norwegians followed closely on visit of Yugo Party delegation to Norway.
- C. Moscow may even see Yugos in role of "honest broker" between USSR and European Socialists.
 - 1. West German Socialists report reversal in Yugo advice, following Khrushchev-Bulganin visit to Belgrade (May '55) with Yugos now prodding SPD to establish contact with East Germany.
 - 2. Zorin, new Soviet Ambassador to Bonn, now reportedly hinting he would like to meet SPD leader Ollenhauer, invite him and others to Moscow.
- V. For the moment, however, main target appears to be France, where Socialists presently head shaky regime, with unsolicited support of French Communists, and are under pressure from Commies to form "popular front".
 - A. Last Sept, Ehrenberg allegedly invited Socialist Guy Mollet (then an "out" but now premier of France) and anti-EDC Daniel Mayer to visit Moscow: invitation reportedly accepted and Mar '56 set as date.

- B. In addition to these two Socialist leaders, a Socialist Party delegation is also scheduled to visit the USSR in March.
 - C. French Socialists officially oppose "popular front", but 40% of Party membership favors "cooperation" with Communists.
 - D. One US observer, forecasting that Mollet Government will be in trouble in March, sees timing of visit to USSR as presenting ideal opportunity for Soviets to apply "popular front" pressure.
 - 1. Observer also sees French Socialists as wanting direct talks with Moscow, rather than discussions with puppet French Communists.
- VI. Another observer, who is a specialist on Socialism in Europe, reports that such key French Socialists as Albert Gazier (now Minister of Social Affairs) and Robert Lacoste (now Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs) are "staunch supporters" of a "popular front".
- A. He reports Sec'y Gen'l of Force Ouvrier (socialist-oriented French labor group), life-long friend of Lacoste, as stating: "If Lacoste continued much longer on the same path, he will find himself working for Duclos in the end".
 - B. As measure of Moscow's interest in possible French "popular front", observer cites Cominform Journal's frontpage call for a "front" in 13 Jan '56 issue; Togliatti's echoing of call in 21 Jan '56 Pravda.

VII. Same observer believes Soviet wooing of European Socialists is only first step in wider program designed by Khrushchev.

- A. Envisions formation of "new international", broad enough to include not only European Socialists and all present Cominform parties, but also to embrace Nasr, Nehru, U Nu, Tito and most of the socialist parties of Asia and Latin America.
- B. Observer claims that formation of some broad all-inclusive "international" was discussed by Tito and Nehru, on occasion of Nehru's visit to Belgrade (June '55).
- C. Also claims that Soviet "emissaries" have discussed similar plan with key West German Social Democrats, who-- while refusing to encourage approaches--find themselves under strong pressure from rank-and-file.

VIII. In conclusion, this specialist on Socialism predicts following strategy for future broadened "international":

- A. "Western Parties" will have task of creation "popular fronts" in opposition to "war pacts", to the unification of a NATO-linked Germany and to US bases abroad. Domestically, will favor simple "left reformism".
- B. Parties of "Colonial Sphere" will have task of formation "National Fronts", embracing ruling nationalist parties, and opposing the West (especially the US) with Soviet support.

IX. In this observer's opinion the key to Soviet success is the acquiescence of the European Socialists.

- A. Pointing out that the majority of European Socialist leaders hate and distrust the Communists, he nonetheless characterizes

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most of them as "weak sisters" who are likely to "give up the struggle" unless something is done to encourage them.

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 - C. Have also reportedly approached

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D. Zorin, new Soviet ambassador to Bonn, now reportedly hinting he would like to meet SPD leader Ollenhauer, perhaps invite him and others to Moscow.

II. French Socialists have accepted invitation to Moscow. Norwegians, Danes and Finns have not.

A. Norwegian Prime Minister Gerhardsen, who received Khrushchev's proposal during Moscow visit (Nov '55), refused to commit himself, took matter up with Labor Party Central Committee on his return.

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